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Paul Conine



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E. Paul Conine

Abingdon Press

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The Church Prays for Peace

Abingdon Press

GOD IN HEAVEN, GOD AMONG US, we give thanks for your word of truth and for all that makes it attractive to us. We thank you for your word of strength and for all it enables us to do. We give thanks for your word of comfort and for the perspective it brings to tragedy and disappointment. We are grateful for your word of peace and the ideal of a world of concord, which is ever our aim.

Deliver us from the aimlessness of life lived apart from your truth. Save us from the frustration of life lived in dependence on our own strength. Spare us the pain of seeking comfort in the dry and thirsty realm of material goods, homemade platitudes, and all the trash of human fads and fancies. Cool the hostilities that threaten humankind. Let us with unwavering faith listen to your voice and attempt to do your will.

Give us the integrity to be faithful to the responsibilities to which our vows commit us. Help us to be the means by which you can bless your Church, so that it can be a blessing to this community, to the world, and to its children.

Gracious God, we pray for our friends: for those in special need but whom we feel powerless to help; for those with burdens of grief we would help them bear; for those with pain we would share, if we could; for some needing counsel that they are unable to accept; for those desperately needing Christ but who carelessly reject him.

God, give us patience with these, and help us to know that our loving concern will help them. As we remember the afflictions of others and of ourselves, remind us that you can redeem any mind, any body, any spirit that is open to your healing.

Hear the earnest prayers of your people for peace, and lead us in the ways of peace in our homes, in the streets, in the ways of commerce, in the halls of government, and in our church through the power of Jesus Christ. Amen.

ETERNAL SPIRIT to whom we all belong, we pause amid the confusion and frustration of unfinished tasks and unfulfilled dreams to come before your throne where we may find eternal truth and the deepest joy. Reward our seeking in this hour, we pray, as you have ever rewarded honest seekers after truth and beauty and goodness.

Blessed Giver of all that elevates and brightens our lives, as we bow in this place where countless others have sought and found calmness and courage, wisdom and hope, grant us the willingness to receive the gifts that have become our heritage because we have placed our trust in you. Take away fear and give confidence; take away anger and hostility and give us loving hearts to smooth the most difficult ways.

As in these days we see the competition, the greed, the hostilities, and the cruelty that turn nation against nation, race against race, person against person, touch our hearts and empower our hands, we pray.

We pray for the hungry of the world to be fed; we pray for the millions who walk in fear; we pray that the lordship of Jesus Christ be recognized in the world and that there may be peace.

God bless our homes and make them fit to receive Christ. Bless our work so that we may offer it to you with honest pride. Bless this our church, and let it ever be a place of refreshment and fellowship.

We pray in the name of our Lord Christ. Amen.

GRACIOUS GOD, found in all the events of our lives, help our faltering faith, so that when we cannot know the comfort of pleasure, ease, or success, we may know the comfort of trust and assurance. Free us from the anxiety that assails us because we cannot know everything; take from us the guilt that burdens us because we cannot do everything; chasten the greed that makes us unhappy because we cannot possess everything.

Help us focus our anger and discontent on the things that offend you: the poverty and pain of those who suffer under the rule of despots, the weariness of those who work too hard for too little, the selfishness of those who work too little for too much.

O God, grant us peace, not according to our deserving, but according to your mercy. We pray in the name of Christ our Lord. Amen.

TIMELINESS GOD, whose very name brings visions of peace, we pray for the varieties of peace that you are prepared to give us whenever we are willing to receive them:

We pray for the inner peace that enables us to respond calmly to those who are angry or afraid or hurt, so that we may be instruments of your healing.

We pray for the self-respect and steadiness that make it unnecessary for us to seek to elevate ourselves at the expense of others.

We pray for enough material resources that we may relieve the suffering of others, and for generous hearts to guide us.

We pray for a sense of proportion, that we may put the spiritual values of truth and beauty and goodness into a proper relationship with the material values that sometimes conflict with them.

We pray for wisdom to use the ballot, the right of protest, and the rights of free speech and assembly in ways that are responsible and constructive.

We pray that you will give us public servants so dedicated to peace that they will use wisely and fairly the power of law, the power of wealth, and the other powers of government as they seek peace.

We pray for world peace, for an end to contests of arms and armies. We pray for an end to the starving and the terrorizing of men, women, and children, an end to the waste of material and lives.

We pray for an end to war.

God of Peace, prepare us to receive these blessings that you are eager to give when we obey your law of love. In Christ's name we ask all these things. Amen.

GRACIOUS GOD, we pray for a clearer understanding of your will for us, a clearer vision of the world's need for your rule, and a stronger determination to obey your will.

We have come into your holy presence to find direction, for we often wander aimlessly, and we come to find strength and hope, for these are difficult days. So we give thanks for these moments of quiet and renewal. We have come, worried about the affairs of the world, sick at heart because of war and terror and tyranny. Yet we have come with little patience, preoccupied with the many things we must do. We have come in anger at our enemies who trouble us, and we are ill prepared for the discipline of worship. Yet you have been willing to receive us as we are, and the glittering tokens of our worldly interests appear dull and tarnished beside your purity and goodness. God, break through our coldness and speak words of truth, of peace, and of love.

The extremity of today's need makes us ashamed of yesterday's trivial concerns. The forces of evil work night and day, but we to whom you have entrusted Christ's message of hope are often seeking rest and escape. We have often delayed the most important work in the world, so now we turn to you to ask to be saved from the results of our own indolence and greed and blindness.

Deliver us from the power of fear, which robs us of the ability to act. Deliver us from the power of hate, which makes us act thoughtlessly and destructively. Deliver us from careless haste, which keeps us from doing anything well. Give us strength and courage, for we are in danger no greater than that which has been willingly endured by your servants through the ages so that we might live and worship in freedom. Merciful God, you did not wait for us to deserve the sacrifice of your Son; you do not wait for us to deserve your offer of eternal life. In contrition we pray again: Do not wait until we deserve peace; grant peace in our time. We pray in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

MERCIFUL GOD, whose gifts sustain us and whose promises give us hope, save us, we pray, from the devastating power of trivial things—the petty differences that can divide a church, the weak excuses that turn us away from doing good, and the foolish pride that keeps us from admitting our fail-

ures.

Despite our pretenses, Lord, you know our uncertainties and our fears. Despite our proud displays of might and our policy of saber-rattling, you know our weaknesses. Give us the integrity to look beyond sham and pretense, beyond pride and boasting. Help us so to live that we bring the fresh atmosphere of righteousness and integrity to replace the sometimes stale atmosphere of politics, the sometimes stuffy atmosphere of our church, the sometimes tense atmosphere of the home, the always hazy atmosphere of diplomacy.

Revive our spirits, O God. Let our faith be as strong as it was in our best times. Renew the strength of our faith, our effectiveness as your servants, and the love in our homes. Be known to us in this hour of seeking, and let the day be brightened by a sense of your nearness. We pray for peace, in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Amen.

ORD GOD, you have given us promises of joy and blessings that do not fade. You have opened doors of opportunity that have led us into the presence of great friends, faithful servants, and gifted teachers. May our lives continue to be enriched by these, and may we see it as our mission to enrich the lives of others by diligent use of what we have been given.

We pray that we may be worthy to receive the gifts that Christ gave his disciples: the gift of healing power, the ability to teach, and the keys of the kingdom of heaven. May we bring new life to this part of the Church of Jesus Christ, and may we give joy to those who are burdened and courage to those who are fearful.

Strength for your Church, integrity for our nation, and peace for the world—for these things we pray in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

ETERNAL GOD, whose unfailing love for us inspires us to love one another, bless with success our poor intermittent efforts to bring your kingdom of love and peace to your people. Forgive us for our childish insistence that we must receive the fruits of the ideals of love and fellowship before we express these ideals in our lives. We give thanks for the hope that you do not let die among the people of the earth: the hope for peace, the hope for universal justice, the hope for physical salvation of countless underfed and diseased children of the human family, the hope for salvation of the souls of people everywhere. We deplore our own inconsistent ways: We fight over the means for achieving peace. We set up rival camps dedicated to fellowship. In the name of justice we tolerate multiple standards of justice. Forgive us, Lord, and let the better part of our nature find expression in your service and in dedication to the fulfillment of Christ's gospel. Amen.

OD OF ALL GENERATIONS—past, present, and future—
 whose might and grace have sustained brave souls who have
 gone before us winning freedom and security for those yet
 unborn, let us so live and serve as to be worthy to be count-
 ed with them.

Help us to put love of our nation above love of ourselves and loyalty
 to Christ's way above loyalty to our nation. Save us from the false pros-
 perity that is the fruit of greed, from the false patriotism that springs
 from affectation, from the poverty of soul that comes from estrangement
 from our God. You are our hope when other hope fails. Though you are
 our last resort, let us not make of you *only* a last resort.

In a world crying out for peace, let us not lose the way to peace by
 seeking it only for ourselves. In a world where so many are naked and
 hungry, let us not close the windows of heaven by seeking plenty only
 for ourselves. Help us to win back to your way and to your Church those
 who have turned away, especially help us to win those who have turned
 away because they have noted the disparity between our promises and
 our achievements.

Each of us has come to this place seeking healing, peace, hope, and
 direction. Grant us these, we pray, and send us forth more willing and
 better prepared to do what you would have us do. Heal our afflictions,
 whether or not we know we are afflicted. Whatever these days hold for
 us, give us the strength and the wisdom that we will need, we pray in
 Christ's name. Amen.

BLESSED LORD GOD, hear our prayer for peace as we unite our voices with the voices of your children all over the world. In spite of our pretense of self-confidence, you know our uncertainties and fears. In spite of our proud displays of might, you know our weaknesses. Give to the heads of nations, O God, the integrity to strive beyond sham and pretense, beyond pride and boasting, in order to achieve the peace about which they make speeches.

Merciful Lord, we see, sometimes too willingly, the faults of our brothers and sisters. When we are moved to speak to them of their errors may we speak in love, and not without awareness of our own sins. Give us the courage to interfere with the course of evil in ways that heal instead of hurt.

When we pray for the sinful, the sick, and the distraught, we are praying for ourselves. May we know what our problems are; may we know where our help is. Bless our lives with new hope and an unconquerable determination to change the world.

We pray in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, who gave his life that this spirit might guide us. Amen.

GOD OF LIGHT AND TRUTH, we call ourselves your people; help us to be worthy of our calling. Jesus Christ has called us the salt of the earth and the light of the world. May we joyfully undertake the tasks before us, that through his Church we may be your instruments to bring light and peace to a dark and troubled world. Give to all of us the will and the ability to fulfill the promises we have made—in church membership, in ordination, in marriage, in the baptism of children.

Deliver us from the temptation to trivialize our faith. Let the condition of the world's people tell us of the need for our service to the hurting, to those facing terror and tyranny, and to all who do not know where to find hope.

Lord God, we pray for those of our company who are ill or who are in any way afflicted in mind or body.

We pray for peace. Make the leaders of nations listen to the voice of the innocent ones who long for the freedom and the health and the shelter that they cannot have in a world that is always preparing for death and destruction.

Lord God, we pray for your blessing on this church.
We ask for these gifts in the name of Christ our Lord. Amen.

VER LIVING GOD, we are refreshed as we consider your word and as we sing your praise. As we turn our thoughts to the dimension of eternity, grant that the events of time and space may be seen in their proper perspective. Some whom we love are suffering pain or grief. Some whom we ought to love are suffering from our indifference. As in this hour we are touched by a sense of your nearness, may those for whom we pray be cheered and helped, finding strength to match their fears and their pain. In the moments of our silence, almighty God, we bring before you those for whom we ask your special help. Let them know in this hour that they have been helped.

We pray also for our church, for our nation, for the world. To our church, give dedicated leaders and willing servants; to our nation, give integrity; to the world, give peace. We pray in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

ALMIGHTY GOD, source of every high aim and of every good impulse, we give thanks for all in our lives that has drawn us to you. We have sometimes been disappointed because we have not understood your way. We have sometimes been fearful because we have not trusted you. We have often failed because we have not heeded you. We often count the costs of obeying you and shrink from the requirements of your way of truth and peace. Help us to understand that there are even greater costs of ignoring your will and attempting to serve only ourselves.

We pray for this company of friends and neighbors. Bless this part of your Church. Give it both leadership and servanthood that will match opportunity with devotion, so that we may be the Church that you would have us be.

Give help to any here whose lives are beset with grief or anxiety or pain. In these moments may we draw on the strength of one another and on your strength. Give us healing and encouragement. Heal the nations of the world, we pray. We have poured more and more of the bounty, which you have given us, into the making of war, and less and less into that which gives life and healing. Change us, our God. Give peace in our time, we pray in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

ETERNAL LORD, speak to us in this hour according to our need and lead us to the source of purer lives, greater service, and clearer understanding. We confess that we have often turned from cooperation to competition, from service to selfishness, from helping to hurting. In mercy turn us back, O God, and set our feet in the paths of peace.

Dear Lord, help us to think of others with compassion when we see their sins, with hope when we see their degradation, with love when we see their unloveliness, with friendship when we see their loneliness, with gratitude when we see their nobility, and grant us always a sincere desire to turn these thoughts to service.

Set us free from the fears that so often determine our action or inaction; turn us from dependence on false leaders who seek only to serve themselves. Open the minds and hearts of all who perpetrate or tolerate violence, so that your children may at last see the evil in the ways of strife and terror and war. Grant that we may desire peace enough to make the effort to be peaceful ourselves. Through Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.

ETERNAL GOD, SPIRIT OF LOVE AND SOURCE OF TRUE
PEACE, the problems and the strife in the world have made us
painfully aware of our weaknesses; Lord, show us our strength.
In days of mounting tension we are reminded of what we cannot
do; show us what great things we can do when we place our trusting
hands in your omnipotent ones.

We confess, Lord God, that we are fearful; yet often we fear the wrong
things. We fear death, when you have offered us eternal life. May we fear
a wasted life more than we fear death. We fear the purveyors of terror
that visit their fury on the innocent; yet you have said that we need not
fear the arrow that flies by day or the pestilence that stalks in darkness.
Teach us to fear the anger that burns in our breasts more than we fear
the threats around us.

We pray for courage and strength, so that we will not be like those
who refuse to see the reality of tragedy and pain and illness. Let our eyes
be open to these, and may our resolve be sharpened so that we strive
with prayer—and with more than prayer—to end war and hunger and
tyranny. Show us the way to a commonwealth in which the rights of
those who do not conform will be zealously protected by the power of
those who do.

We pray in the name of our compassionate Lord, Jesus Christ. Amen.

ETERNAL GOD, OUR CREATOR, you have the strength to save us, the wisdom to guide us, and the love to offer us eternal life; we come before you rejoicing in your gifts—the beauty of your creation, the warmth and friendliness of your Church, your loving care and watchfulness over those too young or too weak to care for themselves. We commit our loved ones and ourselves to your care. We pray that you will heal the sick and comfort those who are afflicted. We bring before you those in this company and in our circle of family and friends who are in special need. Give strength to those who lack it, encouragement to those who despair. Let those who have problems too great for them to solve find you and place their hands confidently in yours.

Lord God, you have saved your people of old from threats and peril. Keep us from complacency, we pray, but help us to trust you, to walk where others fear to tread, and to venture toward that which will lead to peace and true abundance. Guide the leaders in all nations, and we pray particularly for the religious leaders of the world. Make them fearless, capable of inspiring hope, and loyal to you. Let them not, for personal gain or from fear of reprisal, hesitate to praise the righteousness or condemn the sins of your children. We pray in the name of our Lord Christ. Amen.

GRACIOUS GOD, whose love and goodness never fail us, we give thanks for the Church of your Son, for its nurture of us, our parents, and our children. Let the Church be the source of the truth that makes us free; let it be our refuge from the dullness and the cacophony of life lived apart from you. Draw us nearer to one another and to you through the Church.

Our hearts are heavy with burdens we feel powerless to change. We are fearful of the principalities and powers of this earth, fearful of human pride and greed, worried about our own safety and security, and concerned about affairs in our nation, in our community, in our church, and in our homes.

Give us peace as we lay our burdens on you—not the peace of sleepers, but the peace of those who would serve you in a cause that cannot be defeated.

Lord, show us how much we need one another and how much we need you. We pray in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

GRACIOUS GOD, whose ways are right and whose love is eternal, we give thanks for your word of truth and for the gospel of hope. We are grateful that in all of the gifts of your providence, you consider our need and not our deserving. Yet our trust fails and our faith falters. We seek the things that do us harm, and we turn away from true riches. We place our faith in the noisy hucksters who promise peace and sow discontent. We unleash our hot anger against the indiscretions of the young, while we find the graft and the falsehoods of worldly-wise adults merely amusing.

God forgive us! Our silence is often purchased like a trinket in the marketplace, and our smile of approval is offered where partisanship and convenience direct.

God forgive us! Teach us to hate evil but to be merciful to the evil-doer, whether rich or poor. Let us not be so busy hating the evil and forgiving the evildoer that we forget to help the victim.

We are refreshed in our worship by the remembrance of your love for us. Let it be felt especially by those who are most grievously burdened. Heal the nations as your Son healed the blind and the crippled. May our compassion lift the burdens of others. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

ETERNAL SPIRIT, to whom we belong and in whose service is our peace, we come before you on a day of opportunity, a day of decision, a day of promise. If we are not alert, awaken us to what you can do for us. If we are afraid, open our eyes to the divine power that defends and protects us.

Lord God, you have put tasks before us. Surely they are tasks that challenge us, but you give us no task that we cannot meet by trusting in your omnipotent help.

As we worship God, who raised up the mountains and established the seas within their bounds, and Christ, who gave his life to change our hearts and minds, let us not be diverted from our tasks by what is trivial or more convenient or easier.

And God, you have put joy before us. We cannot claim the joy unless we claim the Giver. So let us without embarrassment claim you as our God and Christ as our Savior.

Minister to the needs of this congregation as a part of the Body of Christ, and minister to the needs of each one of us as individuals, we pray. Help us, in the griefs and anxieties and pains that we have, to find that relief to which you would guide us, and let us not be deluded by those whose words of salvation come from hearts of greed.

Sharpen our wits and purify our spirits, we pray in Christ's name.

Amen.

GOD OF RIGHTEOUSNESS AND PEACE, we have prayed
 for peace in our time, and we have seen in these days the
 work of your Holy Spirit calling the nations to harmony and
 their people to freedom. Let not the impatience of the peo-
 ple or the suspicion and greed of their leaders squelch these gifts of your
 love. Open the windows of heaven and pour down the gifts of peace and
 plenty, we pray. Let old hostilities be laid aside, and a spirit of co-opera-
 tion be born.
 Let us see the promises fulfilled that swords be beaten into plowshares
 and that nation shall not lift up sword against nation.
 May the resources of nations be turned to feeding the hungry and
 healing the suffering, and not wasted on machines of war. Guide your
 Church in its peacemaking efforts, and give wisdom to those who call
 upon your name.
 Hear our prayer for those of our company who are ill or in distress.
 Minister to them, and help us to be instruments of your compassion.
 We pray in the name of Christ our Lord. Amen.

ETERNAL LORD, whose precepts are righteous, holy, and reasonable, we look to you for guidance in every time of trouble, for strength with which to face every task, for hope to illuminate the shadows of even our darkest days.

Deliver us from the shortightedness that takes no account of our weakness or of *your* power. Let us not be tempted by shortcuts that seek to avoid human responsibility or divine justice. Spare us the waste of strength and life caused by our inclination to hate those who differ from us.

Guide the nations, especially through the crises of the present. Grant us peace through diplomacy that is tempered with love and truth, and consists not of bluster and alarm. We pray for the hostages, the captives, and the prisoners who are held unjustly and cruelly by tyrants. Stay the hand of terror, and thwart the ways of the tyrant, we pray.

We bring before your throne those of our company and those known to us who are in need. We pray for those in pain, for those suffering mental anguish, for those unemployed or insecurely employed, for those who are victims of appetites that destroy life and health. Deliver them, and fill their lives with better things, their minds with better thoughts. Let each of us be an instrument of your peace for others, so that we shall more easily find our way through our own difficulties.

We pray in Christ's name. Amen.

MERCIFUL GOD, often we have prayed that you would
 help us to avoid wandering minds during worship and
 prayer. But now, O Lord, let our minds wander!
 Let our thoughts go to the lands where children are
 dying for lack of food and medication while heads of state use them as
 pawns in a struggle for power.

Let our minds wander to the streets in the cities of America where the
 homeless and the helpless exist in pain and in destitution, forgotten in a
 land of plenty.

Let our attention stray to those of this company, to our other friends
 and neighbors, those we love, and any whom we may find it difficult to
 love.

Let our thoughts grasp the vastness and the beauty of the universe and
 the awesome power and love of its Creator.

Let us dream of a time foretold by your angels and your prophets,
 when there shall be peace and plenty in a community of love.

With your power and your promise and your love to encourage and
 sustain us, let us reach out as with the hands and heart of Jesus Christ,
 that your kingdom may come, in this place and across the whole earth.

Amen.

DIVINE SPIRIT OF TRUTH AND LIGHT, when we know the joy of being in your presence, we realize that we have come far in our faith journey. But when we fear the hard questions and difficult decisions we know that we yet have far to go.

O Lord, let no lesser concerns conspire to distract us from the eternal values that are your gift to us. Let us prize truth above convenience; let us seek real peace more than shallow victories; let love be seen in all that we do or say.

We pray for the leaders in high offices in our nation. Give them health and strength for the difficult paths they have chosen. We are sometimes disappointed by their intense preoccupation with matters that are not vital to the health of the nation and by their neglect of the issues that mean the difference between hope and despair. Give them your guidance, O sovereign God, and open their ears to the voices of the true prophets of our time. Let them not be influenced by the strident and self-serving claims of those who use the cloak of patriotism or religion to disguise false doctrines.

God, save our nation and give the world peace. Save our church and give us steadfast faith. We pray in Christ's name. Amen.

VETERANS DAY PASTORAL PRAYER

THE CHURCH PRAYS FOR PEACE

GRACIOUS GOD, source of our will to achieve concord and author of every good impulse, we come to you in gratitude for every gift that enriches life. From your heart of love we have been given an unquenchable desire for peace, the knowledge of good and evil, and the hope of better days for all of your creation. Help each of us to play a part in the fulfillment of your purpose for the world.

Today we pay tribute to those who gave much—even life itself—in what has so often been a vain hope for peace. We are grateful for the brave souls who faced death on the fields of battle, grateful for the brave hearts of those who faced the scorn of their peers in the struggle for peace and for an end to the contest for more terrible weapons.

God we pray for peace in this hour when our pride and our pettiness can so easily burst into the flames of battle. Let your love touch the hearts of people everywhere, bringing an end to terror, an end to the large and small wars currently destroying innocent people, and an end to nuclear competition.

Save us from the tragic results of our own pride, our weaknesses, our fears, and our indolence. Deliver all of your children from the danger of accidental or deliberate nuclear destruction.

Only your power can save us, Lord, and we pray for a miracle from your hand to touch humankind with compassion for the poor and the starving. We pray with sorrow for our sins and with determination to help our brothers and sisters everywhere, in the name of Jesus Christ.

Amen.

SEASONAL PRAYERS OF INVOCATION

Advent

GOD OF LIGHT AND TRUTH AND PEACE, bearer of the gifts of Christmas, let the holiday lights and decorations bring to our minds the many benefits that the coming of the Christ has brought us. We join in prayer with his modern disciples everywhere in the hope that his reign of truth and peace may come to earth. Let our government and the leaders of all nations make a new commitment to truth and peace, and may peace be in our hearts and minds. We pray in Christ's name. Amen.

Christmas Eve

GRACIOUS GOD, whose gift of your Son for the peace of all humankind we commemorate before you, speak to us in this hour some word of hope, some word of comfort, some word for the healing of the nations. Tonight we come into your presence weary, but with hearts warmed by the messages of friends, memories of the past, joys that have never quite faded, the renewed awareness of your love, and your nearness to us who call upon your name. We have come together in this place so that amid the celebration, the feasting, and the giving and receiving of gifts, we might not forget the coming of the Christ to live among us. We have come with sadness, earnestly pray that the angels' promise of peace may be fulfilled in every soul here. In your time, may it be fulfilled throughout the earth. We pray in Christ's name. Amen.

New Year

ETERNAL LORD OF OUR LIVES, giver of hope and healing, as we enter a new year we pray that you will fulfill the promise of peace that has been often repeated in our observance of the coming of your Son, Jesus Christ. We pray that we may have the courage to hope for, the alertness to look for, and the ambition to work for the great things that you give us the means to achieve: peace on earth, a purer and stronger Church, and a lessening of crime and corruption. We pray in Christ's name. Amen.

PRAYERS OF CONFESSION

ALMIGHTY GOD, source of all the good that we can ever know, forgive us. We are ashamed to discover in ourselves the seeds of meanness, envy, hatred, and prejudice. Prepare us for the healing that you offer our troubled spirits. Grant that we may also find the seeds of kindness, love, fellowship, and peace within ourselves. May we faithfully strive to understand your word in order to nurture the good that is latent within us. We pray in Christ's name. Amen.

BOUNTIFUL GOD, giver of joy and hope, you offer us the beauty of the earth and the hope of eternity. We are grateful, but not grateful enough. You love us enough to have given your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. We love you, God, but we do not love enough. You direct us in the paths of peace; you offer to guide us in word and deed. We sometimes heed your counsel, but not as faithfully as we should. So there is pain and despair and war and terror where your will and your peace should reign. In the name of Jesus Christ forgive us, we pray. Amen.

MERCIFUL LORD, we call to mind the thousands of children who die each day from starvation and malnutrition. Forgive us for complaining about our food. We have seen the homeless walking our streets; forgive us for complaining about where we live. We are thinking about our Savior, laid in a manger at his birth; forgive us for complaining about the things we lack. Remind us to complain about injustice, about corrupt political or corporate acts, about terror and tyranny and war. Give us power to combat these evils that concern us. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.